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ABSTRACT

Teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards such as self-respect, responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment. Administrators can therefore boost morale and motivate teachers to excel through participatory governance, inservice education, and systematic, supportive evaluation. (TE)

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MOTIVATING TEACHERS FOR EXCELLENCE

Teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards such as self-respect, responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment. Administrators can boost morale and motivate teachers to excel by means of participatory governance, inservice education, and systematic, supportive evaluation.

What do we know about work motivation?

Because motivation is psychologically complex, no general and comprehensive theory has yet answered every question. The rudiments of such a theory, however, have taken shape from the writings of influential theorists such as Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Frederick Herzberg, and more recently, Edward L. Deci.

Maslow argues that there are two basic levels of needs that everyone seeks to satisfy: lower level needs (physiological, security, the need for love and belonging), and higher level needs (for esteem of both self and others and for self-actualization or achieving one's full potential). Once any of these needs is met, it becomes less important as a motivator.

What are extrinsic and intrinsic rewards?

According to several authorities, the proper approach to work motivation lies in a careful distinction between the two kinds of rewards--extrinsic and intrinsic. Herzberg distinguishes between extrinsic rewards surrounding a job (such as salaries, fringe benefits, and job security) and intrinsic rewards of the job itself (such as self-respect, sense of accomplishment, and personal growth). Intrinsic rewards, according to Herzberg, have the primary ability to satisfy and to motivate.

McGregor is best known for his two managerial theories, Theory X and Theory Y, which emphasize, respectively, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Deci, in his book Intrinsic Motivation, shows how injudicious use of extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation.

What motivates teachers?

Recent studies have shown fairly conclusively that teachers are motivated more by intrinsic than by extrinsic rewards. Pastor and Erlandson conducted a survey revealing that teachers perceive their needs and measure their job satisfaction primarily by such factors as participating in decision-making, use of a variety of valued skills, freedom and independence, challenge, expression of creativity, and opportunity for learning. They conclude that high internal motivation, work satisfaction, and high quality performance depend on three "critical psychological states": experienced meaningfulness, responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of results.

Sergiovanni likewise found that teachers obtain their greatest satisfaction through the sense of achievement in reaching and affecting students, experiencing recognition, and feeling responsible.

What can administrators do to encourage teachers?

In a survey conducted by Brodinsky and Neill, a majority of school administrators (and teachers as well) cited three policies as most conducive to improving morale and motivating their staff: shared governance, inservice education, and systematic, supportive evaluation.

Shared governance, or participatory management, enhances teachers' professional status and their "ownership" in the planning and operation of the school, thus giving them a vested interest in school performance. It also promotes harmony and trust among teachers and administrators. The results of such cooperation can be dramatic: in Salt Lake City, a shared governance policy enacted eight years ago enabled teachers and administrators to develop a districtwide accountability plan, an evaluation/remediation process, a salary progression program, and a curriculum reform to emphasize basic skills, all with the enthusiastic participation of teachers.

Inservice education, formal or informal, promotes sharing of ideas and interdependence among teachers. In form, it can be as simple as sharing resources or providing opportunities for conversation among teachers on professional concerns, or as formal as workshops and seminars, depending on available resources. The payoff is both improved instructional techniques and enhancement of professional self-awareness among teachers.

How can an evaluation system help to motivate teachers?

An evaluation system, if well designed, provides teachers with the necessary feedback to assess their own professional growth. A poorly designed evaluation system can be disastrous, pitting teachers against administrators and engendering anxiety, mistrust, and resentment.

To avoid such pitfalls, an evaluation system should be developed and implemented with teacher participation and be based on research and common sense in relation to individual district needs. Its main purpose should not be to judge, but to help teachers improve. Accordingly, an evaluation system should respect individual worth and dignity by involving teachers in setting personal and organizational objectives. It should also foster imagination and creativity, recognize work well done, and involve both self-appraisal and appraisal of others.

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